

DECISIONS OF THE U.S. BOARD ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

THE PROBLEM

1. To determine the extent to which the decisions of the U.S. Board on Geographical Names shall be considered binding upon War and Navy Department agencies engaged in the production of maps, charts, and related documents.

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FACTS BEARING ON THE PROBLEM

2. USBGN has been established by executive order for the purpose of obtaining uniform usage in geographic nomenclature and orthography throughout the Federal agencies, and particularly on the maps and charts prepared by them.

3. Decisions rendered by USBGN are presumably binding on all Federal agencies, including the Army Map Service, the Hydrographic Office, U.S.N., and those agencies producing intelligence documents based on maps and charts. Currently, the Secretary of the Interior is attempting to enforce decisions of the USBGN through the issue of instructions directly to the agencies concerned.

4. AC of S, A-2; AC of S, G-2; ONI; Hydrographic Office; JISPB; and AMS are the War and Navy Department agencies most concerned.

5. Decisions by USBGN, rendered while maps and charts are under production, have the effect of confusing nomenclature, rather than clarifying. If decisions of the Board are followed religiously, a great waste of time and materials in the production of maps and charts will result.

6. USBGN has been notified by the Office of Chief of Engineers that the War Department Budget does not provide for funds to be transferred to the USBGN during Fiscal Year 1945. Withdrawal of financial support by OCE does not abrogate the authority of USBGN in name matters.

7. One of the functions of the Joint Topographical Subcommittee is the following:

a. Assist the Joint Intelligence Committee in matters regarding topographical and other static intelligence studies, maps and charts.

OSD and JCS review(s) completed.

DISCUSSION

8. USBGN was re-activated by the Chief of Engineers in February, 1943, as the appropriate agency to assist in the clarification of names policies dealing with mapping of foreign areas. Under its charter, the Board is limited to rendering decisions on matters brought to its attention by interested governmental agencies. Actually, the Board has gone much further, and has rendered decisions entirely on its own responsibility.

9. USBGN can have no control over the establishment of names of new places occupied by Army and Navy units as the war progresses. Such names are applied locally as a matter of immediate necessity, and, by reason of their appearance in military publications, must stand for the duration of the war regardless of the Board's decisions.

10. With reference to the establishment of general policies for treatment of foreign names, the Board has performed a notable service. In some cases, however, decisions have been rendered after pertinent maps and charts have been published. Revision of these maps and charts to accord with such policies, both in the matter of general treatment and in the case of specific geographic names, would serve no useful purpose. On the other hand, acceptance of such decisions would result in unnecessary waste of manpower and materials. Further, since wide distribution of charts and maps has been completed, the issue of new editions for the correction of geographic names would result in great confusion.

11. It is the function and duty of Army and Navy agencies to coordinate closely map and chart production to insure the greatest possible consistency. It is their function also to decide, without reference to the Department of the Interior, to what extent their operations shall be affected by the decisions of USBGN.

12. To abrogate the authority of USBGN requires an executive order, a drastic step which is not warranted by present need. The end of the war will relieve the current connotation of urgency, and agencies then can more readily accommodate themselves to procedures of USBGN. Without adequate funds work of USBGN will have to be curtailed after 30 June 1944.

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13. A full time Geographical Names Committee consisting of highly technically qualified personnel is necessary to arrive at an inter-service decision as to geographic nomenclature and orthography by direct negotiation. This committee should contain a representative from the map producing agencies of the two services, i.e., Hydrographic Office and Army Map Service, as well as representative from the State Department.

14. The Joint Topographical Subcommittee recommends that the Joint Intelligence Committee approve the following:

a. Authorization for the Joint Intelligence Study Publishing Board to establish a Foreign Geographical Names Committee consisting of highly technically qualified personnel from the following agencies:

- (1) Hydrographic Office
- (2) Army Map Service
- (3) State Department

b. Recommend to the Joint Chiefs of Staff that all service agencies be directed to accept the agreement of this committee on foreign geographical names;

c. Request the assignment of Commander P. K. Adams, Coast and Geodetic Survey (at present a member of the Advisory Committee of USBGN) as permanent chairman of this committee.